DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 299 353 UD 026 407

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TITLE Allies in Education: A Profile of: Atlanta Partnership of Business and Education, Atlanta, Georgia.
INSTITUTION Public/Private Ventures, Philadelphia, PA.
PUB DATE Sep 87
NOTE 32p.; For related documents, see ED 291 821-823.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Agency Cooperation; Dropout Programs; Elementary Secondary Education; High Risk Students; *Program Evaluation; *School Business Relationship; *School Community Relationship; Urban Education; *Urban Programs
IDENTIFIERS Adopt a School; *Atlanta Partnership of Business and Education Inc; Atlanta Public Schools GA; *Partnerships; Public Private Relationship

ABSTRACT

The Atlanta (Georgia) Partnership of Business and Education, a private nonprofit corporation, is an umbrella organization that coordinates a range of activities aimed at strengthening education in Atlanta's public schools. There are over 300 business members of the partnership, and a wide range of affiliated civic, educational, and religious organizations. The partnership was begun in 1981. This report provides the following: (1) a description of the partnership's origins, context, and support; (2) an overview of the partnership's components and budget, and a discussion of both the major program that is operated out of the partnership office, the Adopt A School Program, and other activities of the office; (3) a description of the Adopt-A-Student Program, which has chosen to remain outside of the partnership, but which is publicized in partnership materials; and (4) a discussion of the implications of the partnership for the Atlanta system. (BJV)

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Allies in Education

A Profile of:

Atlanta Partnership of Business and Education Atlanta, Georgia

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Allies in Education

A Profile of:

Atlanta Partnership of Business and Education
Atlanta, Georgia

by Phyllis Snyder and Sheila Rosenblum

September 1987

THE SCHOOL/BUSINESS COLLABORATIONS STUDY

This profile of the Atlanta Partnership of Business and Education is part of an assessment by Public/Private Ventures of partnerships between business and education. The three-year study was funded by The CIGNA Foundation, The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, The Exxon Education Foundation, The IBM Corporation, The Pew Memorial Trust, and The Rockefeller Foundation. The assessment addressed three basic issues:

- What is the nature of school/business collaborations? What achievements are expected?
- What types of youth are served by these collaborative efforts?
- What role does business play in the collaborations? How did business get involved? Why does it continue to be involved?

Public/Private Ventures has published Allies in Education: Schools and Businesses Working Together for At-Risk Youth, a two-year volume report these central questions. Profiles of nine different partnerships assessed as part of this project are included in the report's second volume.

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Public/Private Ventures is a not-for-profit corporation that designs, manages and evaluates social policy initiatives designed to help disadvantaged people, especially youth, become productively employed and self-sufficient.

To achieve that goal, P/PV works with schools, government, employment and training organizations, community-based agencies, foundations and business in a variety of ways:

- We design new strategies to remedy such pressing problems as the high dropout rate, illiteracy and youth unemployment.
- We evaluate the effectiveness of programs designed to confront these problems.
- We conduct multisite national demonstrations to rigorously test promising new solutions.
- We help the public and private sectors replicate initiatives that have proven effective.

From all our work, we distill the best practices and most significant research findings, and actively promote their use in the development of sound public policy.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Atlanta Partnership of Business and Education, a private not-for-profit corporation, is an umbrella organization that coordinates a range of activities aimed at strengthening education in Atlanta's public schools. There are over 300 business members of the partnership, and a wide range of affiliated civic, educational and religious organizations. The partnership was begun in 1981 partly in response to an appeal from Superintendent of Schools Alonzo Crim, who asked Atlanta citizens to become a "community of believers" for the schools. Partnership staff was recruited from and is paid by, the school district; its office space is donated by Georgia State University.

The partnership performs a variety of functions that assists business people and members of civic and religious organizations to contribute time, expertise, funds, and equipment to aid the Atlanta schools. The partnership operates one program, assists in fundraising for two efforts, secures resources for a fourth, and acts as an intermediary and promoter for the remaining two.

The partnership was launched after Dr. Crim had been superintendent for eight years and had already begun to initiate changes within the schools. It is hard to separate the partnership's effects on the school system from effects resulting from many other changes implemented by a strong and charismatic superintendent. Superintendent Crim has consistently set specific goals for the schools and kept the community informed about the students' and teachers' ability to achieve those goals. Yet, in calling for the community to demonstrate its support for the schools, Crim and the other Partnership founders deliberately refrained from setting goals for the partnership. Business people are viewed as volunteers who contribute whatever support and resources they wish. According to a history of the partnership contained in its annual report, the partnership has one goal: "To improve the quality of life for the people of our area by improving their educational attainment level."

Therefore, any attempt to assess the impact of the partnership--the changes that it has made in the schools and in the community's attitude toward the schools--is limited by the deliberate vagueness of its initial goals.

P/PV chose to include the Atlanta Partnership in this study because it offers one of the few examples of a school/business collaboration whose multiple components seek to involve the entire community. It provides an opportunity to examine the effect of coordinating several separate efforts under an umbrella organization and to see whether there is any indication that the combined effort increases the private sector's impact on the schools and provides greater benefits to students. The objective

of this report is to describe the workings of the partnership and the ways in which it may potentially improve the school system and, in particular, assist disadvantaged youth. It is based on a review of documents and on interviews with key actors in the Atlanta School District, the partnership staff, and a sample of business, school staff and student participants in two types of programs. These interviews were conducted over a four day period in the spring of 1985 and during a two-day follow-up visit in the fall of 1986.

The report is organized as follows:

- A description of the partnership's origins, context, and support;
- An overview of the partnership's components and budget, and a discussion of both the major program that is operated out of the partnership office, the Adopt A School Program, and of other activities of the office;
- A description of the Adopt-A-Student program, which has chosen to remain outside the partnership, but which is publicized in partnership materials; and
- A discussion of the implications of the partnership for the Atlanta system.

II. THE PARTNERSHIP OF BUSINESS AND EDUCATION, INC.: AN OVERVIEW

The Atlanta Partnership of Business and Education, Inc. began in 1981 as a three-way partnership between the Atlanta Public Schools, businesses, and colleges and universities. It is made up of approximately 300 member organizations plus volunteers from community service and religious organizations. The goal of the partnership is to improve the quality of life in Atlanta through education.

ORIGINS OF THE PARTNERSHIP

The launching of the Atlanta Partnership resulted from a number of changes in the Atlanta schools and in the community's relationship to the schools. These changes occurred over a number of years; many culminated during the 1970s. When Superintendent Alonzo Crim arrived in 1973 he inherited a system that had been engaged in desegregation litigation for 25 years. The settlement that had been effected between the plaintiffs and the Board of Education included achievement of parity by race in administrative positions, and the hiring of a black superintendent. The population of the school system had changed from 60 percent white in the late 1950s to over 80 percent black by 1973; during the next few years it became over 90 percent black.

Dr. Crim found a school system not only battered by years of conflict but also verging on bankruptcy; the latter threat was great enough to have attracted the concern of the business community, particularly, the leading bankers. In order to reduce the system's debt, the bankers assisted the superintendent in reorganizing the school system's management and Dr. Crim closed over 60 schools. Although the measures were drastic, they improved the school district's operations and helped convince the business leaders that they could work with the new superintendent.

In his prior position as a school superintendent in California, Dr. Crim had developed a reputation for reaching out and involving the community. He began to use this strategy in Atlanta. During his second year there, school staff conducted town hall meetings throughout the city so that they could hear the public's view of the schools and find out what citizens thought should be done to improve them. After listening to citizens' comments at the town meetings and reviewing reports from school administrators, Dr. Crim and his staff established a set of goals for bringing the students up to and above national norms in reading and mathematics and for improving both graduation and attendance rates. He promised to keep the community informed of the system's success in meeting the goals through annual reports of

the school district's progress. He requested that the community support the schools in their quest to improve, and urged Atlanta's citizens to become what he began to call a "community of believers."

The business community's attention was also directed to the schools by the Atlanta City Council President, Marvin Arrington, who organized an Economic Development Task Force in 1980. That group's final report included two major conclusions: (1) dependence on a high quality school system was most important if Atlanta was to be a center of economic growth and, (2) there was a need for close cooperation between the business community and the school system.

It was the conjunction of these events, conditions and individuals that contributed to the formation of the partnership in 1981. However, key to the development of a working relationship between the private sector and the schools was the community's perception of Dr. Crim. His willingness to improve the management and accountability of the school district and to call upon the business community for support signaled a change in school/business relations in Atlanta and helped to launch the partnership of Business and Education.

There were several other significant figures involved in beginning the partnership. These include Dr. Boyd Odom, who was management consultant to Superintendent Crim and a former area superintendent in the school district, and Thomas Hamall, the Executive Vice President of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, which had previously initiated an Adopt A School Program. Odom and the vice president of the chamber chaired a steering committee that worked with Dr. Crim to set up the partnership. Members of the steering committee included several deans from Georgia State University, an acting dean of Atlanta University and several representatives of the chamber as well. Support was pledged by the president of Georgia State.

The plan developed by the steering committee was presented at a luncheon seminar at Georgia State University in January 1981. Two hundred business representatives attended the seminar and heard speeches by the governor and the superintendent. Attendees also viewed a film about the proposed partnership entitled "Partnership of Progress." Membership applications for the partnership were circulated and 68 were completed at the seminar, effecting the beginning of the partnership. Membership committed signers to nothing more than the concept of partnership, but it signalled the willingness of the private sector and community leaders to offer support for and confidence in public education. This symbolic act reflected a new spirit in Atlanta.

Following the seminar, the steering committee became the charter board of directors of the partnership and steps were taken to

charter the partnership as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, non-profit corporation. Tentative approval was gained and tax-exempt status was granted in March 1982.

Several of those on the initial steering committee continue to play significant roles in the development of the partnership. Dr. Odom became executive director, and several other members continue to serve on the executive committee and as advisors to Superintendent Crim.

Although university and school district people played a significant role in start-up, the partnership also included chief executive officers from the business community in its leadership from the beginning. The interim president of the partnership was L. Edmund Rast, who was president of Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company. The first elected president was James Zimmerman, president of Rich's department store. Zimmerman has played a particularly active role in assisting the schools of Atlanta.

Support of the Partnership Organization

Initial funding for the creation of the partnership came from businesses and from the Chamber of Commerce. From the outset, emphasis was placed on the fact that the school district was seeking human resources for expertise, interest and participation through membership--not necessarily financial resources. Many of the contributions by business and higher education partners have been in-kind gifts such as office space and printing and mailing. Some funding of Partnership operations has been provided through several local foundations. However, most support has been in the form of human resources, such as volunteer labor and expertise. Business people volunteer as guides, classroom presenters, mentors, advisors and tutors. At no point were businesses asked to achieve certain levels of participation or to meet fixed goals. They were asked to believe in and support what the schools did. The partnership was to serve as a means of coordinating their efforts.

III. THE PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION

The partnership, currently an organization of several hundred business members, is governed by a board of directors and staffed by three professionals who previously worked for the school district. The staff includes Dr. Boyd Odom, the executive director; Dr. Lowrie Fraser, coordinator of the Adopt A School Program; and Dr. Carole McCarson, who has primary responsibility for the technology initiatives of the partnership. Fraser and McCarson's salaries continue to be paid by the school district; Odom is retired from the school district and his salary is paid from operating funds. According to materials prepared by the executive director, the activities of the partnership focused on six areas during the 1985-86 academic year:

- The Adopt A School Program: This is the single program operated solely by the partnership. It consists of pairings of individual schools and businesses. It is coordinated by Dr. Lowrie Fraser with the assistance of a business advisory task force.

- Distinguished Scholars/Humanities Program. The partnership is the recipient of a grant made by The Rockefeller Foundation to support cooperative programs between university faculty and teachers in the school district. The local program is coordinated by the National Faculty Humanities Program. The partnership office is responsible both for raising matching funds to the Rockefeller grant and also for administering the budget, including payments to the National Faculty and to the school district.

- Institutionalization. The director is working with a business task force to raise money for an endowed chair at Georgia State University that will promote school/business partnerships. It will be shared by the Departments of Business and Education.

- Technology: Dr. Carole McCarson of the partnership office is responsible for enlisting business support for the four magnet high schools that form the Technology Quadrangle.

- Volunteers/Tutorial: The partnership staff helps link volunteer tutors from the many religious organizations that participate in the partnership with schools that seek tutors. Employees from Atlanta's businesses also participate.

- o Affirmative Action/Adopt-A-Student Program: Developed and operated by the Merit Employment Association (MEA), an organization of about 40 Atlanta businesses, the program has been coordinated by Judy Beard of Southern Bell, who works with Dr. Claude George, a special consultant to the superintendent. Business volunteers work individually with junior and senior high school students who are at risk of not graduating from high school. The program has come to be referred to as the Adopt-A-Student Program.

Budget

The nature of the coordination performed by the partnership office is reflected in its annual financial report. The report issued by the partnership office for the FY 1986, which began July 1, 1985, lists funds received from 25 sources, including local and national foundations, local businesses and the Atlanta Public Schools. The partnership's financial report goes beyond reporting its own expenses to include the grants that it administers for others.

The partnership began the 1986 fiscal year with a balance of $46,482.66. Total receipts for the year were $298,432.00, and disbursements were $302,002.90, leaving a closing balance of $42,911.76.

However, little of the reported funds were used to support activities that are operated directly by the partnership office. Of $298,432 in total receipts, only 29 percent, or $87,886, was earmarked for staffing the office and operating the Adopt A School Program. Almost all the remaining funds were for operating the Distinguished Scholars/Humanities Program. The financial report does not list the considerable in-kind support from which the partnership office and the individual programs benefit. Included among the in-kind contributions are the office space donated by Georgia State University, printing of material by both the University and participating businesses, and sponsorship of Partnership dinners by member organizations.

PROGRAMS

The section below describes five of the partnership initiatives, including the Adopt A School program, the only program operated exclusively from the partnership office. Since the MEA Adopt-A-Student program operates outside of the partnership office and considers the partnership to be a supporting rather than a sponsoring organization, it will be discussed separately in a later section.

THE ADOPT A SCHOOL PROGRAM

The Adopt A School Program is the best-known activity operated by the Atlanta Partnership of Business and Education and has contributed greatly to the community's pride in the schools. Begun by the Chamber of Commerce during 1980, the year prior to the partnership's start-up, the program is run by Dr. Fraser, who assumed responsibility for development of Adopt A School during the 1981-82 school year while serving as the coordinator of magnet schools for the Atlanta Public Schools. In 1983, coordination of Adopt A School became her full-time job, and her salary continues to be paid by the school district. Dr. Fraser works closely with a business advisory task force, made up of representatives of partnership firms. Its first chair was Paul Ferm of C & S Bank, and he played an important role in the earlier financial reorganization of the schools. The current chair is Dennis Betz of Southern Bell. The membership of the entire Partnership is available to Dr. Fraser as a source of business adoptions; during 1984-85, 103 schools and programs had been adopted. Most adoptions result from the efforts that Fraser or task force members make to recruit individual businesses. Oglivy and Mather, an advertising agency whose vice-president recently joined the task force, is working on a marketing plan to recruit more adopters. Twenty-eight schools in the district currently remain unadopted and seek to be matched with adopters.

The Atlanta Adopt A School Program is typical of the most widespread model of school/business collaboration throughout the country: a pairing of an individual business and a school. Adoptions can encompass a wide range of activities. Such programs permit businesses to contribute the type and level of resources comfortable for the firm. However, unlike the adoption programs in many cities, Atlanta's is under the umbrella of the Partnership of Business and Education; the pairings of schools and businesses can gain visibility from partnership publicity and the membership provides a source of businesses to recruit.

One of the superintendent's goals has been to convince students that people who are important believe in them and their commitment to learning. To change students' attitudes about what they can accomplish, Crim encourages educators at every level, business people, clergy, parents and citizens to see the students as "winners rather than losers." The Adopt A School program is among the most visible manifestations of this community support since it provides a structured way for the business community to play a role in supporting the education of the children of Atlanta.

Goals of the Program

A handbook produced by the Atlanta Adopt A School program defines a school/business adoption as "a voluntary relationship between one or more businesses/organizations and a school for the support and enrichment of the educational process." The adoptions are intended to inform the community about the schools and to enlist them in the educational growth of the students. Despite the superintendent's emphasis on gaining support from people to encourage youth, many of the adoptions have emphasized material resources.

Although the institutional match is usually made by the Coordinator, the content of each adoption is determined jointly by representatives of the business and the school. Projects almost always serve the entire school population and do not focus on youth who may be most in need of extra support. Specific goals for each adoption vary according to the needs of the school and the nature and extent of interest of the particular business. Typically, they include such activities as exposing students to career possibilities, providing educational enrichment and sponsoring out-of-school trips.

In addition to aiding students, participation in the program is designed to assist teachers in planning for and gaining access to expertise and technical assistance from the adopting company. A teacher's ability to plan and develop with business representatives activities that incorporate business resources into the classroom may determine the extent to which an adoption can achieve its goals.

Although the Adopt A School Handbook refers to meeting the needs and using the resources of both school and business to their mutual benefit, the business goals and benefits are far less explicit. In becoming involved in the Adopt A School program, businesses generally pursue a mixture of self-interest and altruism. The superintendent has effectively communicated to businesses the importance of their involvement in the education of students in Atlanta, and many are willing to demonstrate this support through an adoption. By improving the quality of education, the partnership hopes both to improve the quality of Atlanta's graduates, who will be their future labor force, and also to promote the reputation of the city's schools, making it easier to recruit employees from other areas. For some firms, a more immediate goal may be to provide information about jobs within their industry and to encourage students to think about career possibilities in that area. Most of all, adoption of a school is seen as a public service.

Since the level of commitment of a business to its adopted school is negotiable within each pairing, individual coordinators from schools and business together develop a program that addresses

the school's needs and the business's willingness to become involved. Contracts between business and school are renewed on an annual basis and, therefore, the commitment can be reexamined at the end of that time. Many of the adoptions involve programs that are short-term and sporadic, though a few do continue for a longer period. There are many cases where a business has increased its level of commitment and activity.

Recruitment

The recruitment of both schools and businesses and the subsequent pairing is done by the staff of the Adopt A School Program, through a variety of techniques. Of the initial group of 68 companies that enrolled in the partnership at the founding meeting, many, though not all, entered into adoptions. Further recruitment is done by publicizing existing programs, through individual solicitation by participating business people, and by cold calls made by Lowrie Fraser. As the benefits of the program have become better known, employees of business organizations have begun to seek adoptions for their own children's schools. Initial solicitation is frequently at the level of senior management, though subsequent participation is at a less senior level. In the case of the magnet schools, one firm within the magnet's area of specialization often assumes responsibility for taking the lead and for recruiting other firms from the industry to assist the magnet.

School recruitment is somewhat simpler. Principals are invited to apply, or initiate a request for an adoption. Forms are made available for principals to list their school's needs and expectations for volunteers; the forms are used by the partnership as data for matching the school with a firm whose desired contribution matches the school's needs. A school may be paired with more than one company, but most companies are paired with only one school.

Program Development

Once a business and school have been paired, guidelines for the development of a program or specific activity are available in the Adopt A School Handbook. The handbook outlines goals and expectations for adoptions and provides sample contracts and program ideas for firms and schools. However, there is no formal training program or guidance for individual company employees who desire to participate, but who may not have the background to enter and work comfortably in a school. Training or orientation must occur on an individual basis through meetings with Lowrie Fraser or by reading the handbook.

Although the Adopt A School literature emphasizes human resources commitment, the extent of that commitment varies greatly from company to company. Developing plans for involving business

people in the educational process requires a commitment of time and creativity by both teachers and business. In many individual adoptions, contributions have consisted of money or materials that may be more easily secured by the business. For example, a company's contribution may take the form of awards for students who have been successful in a particular area, or funds for special programs the school could not afford. However, there are examples of a more personal commitment by individuals within a company. Employees may visit the school to describe the nature of their work, helping the students to make the connection between the world of work and what they are learning in school.

Certain adoption activities fall into typical categories:

- Employers visit the school and make presentations. For example, the hospital staff from Piedmont Hospital delivered a series of talks about the heart for students and staff at E. Rivers Elementary School.

- The company sponsors field trips or provides prize money for students with outstanding academic or attendance records. The Kroger Company funded a field trip to a performance of "Cinderella" and sponsored 40 students at a summer day camp.

- The company donates equipment or funds to purchase items the school could not afford on its own. C.W. Trucking Company contributed $2,500 to furnish a new science laboratory at E. R. Carter Elementary School.

Some companies have worked with teachers to integrate business experience into the curriculum. One example is the adoption of the Jackson Elementary School by the Peasant Restaurant chain. A vice-president of the chain coordinated a series of sessions in which people from her organization explained to the school's fifth-graders the planning and decisions required to operate restaurants. The individual sessions required the class to use math and English skills. The students were then able to apply their learning to the operation of a cookie concession at the school fair, where the students planned, baked and sold the cookies. The restaurant's representative questioned the youth thoroughly at the end of the experience to see what aspects of the business they liked and didn't like. Both the fifth-graders and the management of the restaurant chain expressed enormous satisfaction with the experience.

In this case, the restaurant chain decided to become involved because its management felt that most children did not consider future careers in restaurants and food management. In addition, management wanted to do something to support the community that provided the clientele for their restaurants. According to the principal of Jackson, the business person who led the classes was

a natural teacher and contributed greatly to the program's success.

Magnet Schools

Some of the adoptions with the most intense level of involvement occur at magnet schools, which are structured to incorporate business assistance. Generally a consortium of business people working in the magnet's area of concentration advises the school on its curriculum, contributes equipment and, in some cases, jobs. The fact that many of the magnet schools' graduates hope to enter professions needed by their partner firms helps to structure a mutual set of goals. The Grady Magnet School of Communications has benefited from resources provided by television stations and newspapers in the Atlanta area. At Harper High School, which houses the banking magnet, an advisory board composed of representatives of eight Atlanta banks assists with curriculum development, helps secure work experience positions during the school year and the summer, and aids in publicizing the program. Adopting magnet schools appeals to business mainly for two reasons: they are a source of future employees, and they serve to enhance and promote the school system as a means to keep and attract middle-class families.

Business Involvement in Program Operation

The Adopt A School program is entirely a volunteer effort and, once a company accepts an adoption, individual employees of that company participate or not as they wish. Promotion and support of adoption activities varies from firm to firm. In many cases, participation is highlighted in internal publications of large businesses and participants gain some status or, at least, attention from their activities. Although most employees who volunteer at the schools are likely to be middle-level managers, CEO involvement is required to make the initial commitment of a company's time and resources. Further, in cases where the CEO is involved in activities of the partnership, he or she may place particular importance on the sustained involvement of company employees. However, the most necessary support comes from an individual's direct supervisor; since activities occur during the work day, a supervisor's approval is essential. General company support does not suffice.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Adopt A School Handbook states that the program developed by each adoption should be goal-oriented and have a built-in evaluation process based on clearly stated objectives. However, the nature of many programs, which are episodic or diffuse, does not lend itself to this type of scrutiny or measurement, nor is anyone generally assigned to take responsibility for evaluation. The activities at individual schools are generally monitored by

principals within the school, by Lowrie Fraser or, as described in the Peasant Restaurant adoption, by the company.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Adopt A School

A major strength of the Adopt A School program has been its ability to increase the business community's interest in and exposure to the schools. Promotion of the program within the community is a prime aim of those running the program and, in fact, visibility of individual adoptions helps to attract other businesses and indicates the breadth of business involvement in the schools. The public relations effort is substantial; it includes a quarterly newsletter, prepared by the coordinator, that shares information about activities of individual partnerships. Businesses have also publicized their efforts through in-house publications. The Atlanta newspapers, which have been supportive of the entire Partnership effort, have featured Adopt A School programs. Local television stations have produced specials featuring events related to adoptions. There is no question that the awareness and interest of the business community has been heightened by the visibility of Adopt A School efforts.

A weakness of the program, however, is that many of the adoptions are more ceremonial than substantive. The program's decentralized nature, which allows the school and business to negotiate the level and content of the commitment, means that some collaborations offer very little. It also produces an uneven distribution of benefits to youth within a school. The potential for producing measurable effects in academic achievement or future employability is limited. Even in adoptions where a positive and sustained relationship has developed between school and business, the philosophy of the program has been to leave the decision to increase or deepen the commitment up to the participants.

The coordinator has worked hard to launch, develop and promote the program. She has effectively involved many of her business task force members in its operation. However, she has been limited in her ability to assess and strengthen individual adoptions by the lack of additional staff.

OTHER PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

The four other initiatives that operate under the partnership umbrella are the responsibility of Boyd Odom and Carole McCarson. In each of these initiatives, the role that the partnership office plays is primarily an administrative one, serving as a liaison between a business, foundation or university and the Atlanta Public Schools. One of these efforts, referred to as Institutionalization, also requires planning and development by the staff of the partnership office, who work with a business

advisory committee. In the Distinguished Scholars/Humanities Program and the Institutionalization effort, the partnership office has fundraising as well as management responsibility. The Atlanta Partnership is one of several similar programs that received a Rockefeller Foundation grant to conduct a Distinguished Scholars/Humanities Program. The design and implementation of individual efforts under this grant rests with the National Faculty Humanities Program, local universities and the school district, and has included a number of efforts directed at teachers, such as in-service programs and summer workshops. The partnership has assisted in raising the necessary matching funds and administering the budget.

The Institutionalization initiative is a fundraising campaign to endow a chair at Georgia State University. The staff of the partnership works with a business advisory committee to raise funding for a chair to be shared by the Departments of Business and Education. Odom regards this effort as a means of promoting Atlanta and ensuring a continuing focus on school/business collaborations at the university level.

The technology initiative is an effort to increase contributions of human and material resources by high technology businesses to the four technology magnet schools. Carol McCarson of the partnership staff coordinates this effort and has succeeded in obtaining the services of several loaned executives to work in the schools and much donated equipment. However, real responsibility for the technology magnets, like the other magnets in Atlanta's high schools, rests with the school district.

The partnership Office links the volunteer tutoring efforts operated by Atlanta's religious and civic organizations with schools that seek tutors. Recruitment, training and assignment of volunteers is overseen by the individual organizations. Part of the tutoring effort has targeted such out-of-school groups as illiterate adults, and its efforts have led to the development of an Adult Literacy Center.

The plan prepared by Odom for the 1986-87 school year, listing objectives in each of the four areas, gives a clearer indication of the extent of the partnership's role and responsibilities in these efforts. The role he describes is primarily one of maintenance and support; listed below are the goals for two of the efforts.

"Institutionalization

1. Continue and expand activities with the Georgia Education Leadership Academy and the Georgia Department of Education related to statewide business and education collaboration.

2. Develop and implement an operational plan leading to an endowed chair at GSU involving the Colleges of Business and Education with the major purpose being widespread community support for education.

3. Facilitate with Georgia State University the W. T. Grant research project on the effectiveness of the Adopt-A-Student Program.

4. Continue collaboration with Georgia State University and the Institute for Educational Leadership relative to Project Metro-Link.

5. Continue to seek foundation funding.

6. Continue to facilitate bilateral management training programs co-sponsored by Georgia State University Bureau of Research and Services and Metro Atlanta businesses.

Volunteer/Tutorial

1. Continue to maintain and expand networks from the religious community and to provide information on the same to APS.

2. Continue promotion of the PTA throughout our activities.

3. Expand our national network for advocacy of volunteer utilization in schools."

It is instructive to note the general nature of these goals, which are consistent with a point made earlier. The partnership is regarded as an effort to enlist the business community's presence and general support for the Atlanta Public Schools, and not as a means to specify precise levels of support by business for the schools. The superintendent's position, which is reflected in the partnership's operation, is that once business volunteers come to know individual students, their involvement in the schools will increase over time.

IV. THE ADOPT-A-STUDENT PROGRAM

In addition to operating Adopt A School, the partnership actively supports another collaborative effort that provides business assistance directly to students, the Adopt-A-Student Program. The Adopt-A-Student Program is jointly sponsored by the Merit Employment Association (MEA), an organization of about 40 businesses, and the Atlanta Public Schools. Although the partnership lists the program as one of its initiatives, the program directors operate separately from the partnership and regard the partnership more as its supporter. Adopt-A-Student benefits from the contacts and publicity generated by the partnership but chooses to keep its operations outside the partnership. The core of this program is an individual relationship between a volunteer from the business community, called a consultant, and a junior or senior high school student who is in the lowest quartile of the class and in need of assistance in making the transition from school to work. The personal relationship between the adult and student is supplemented with a series of eight job-readiness workshops offered for both consultants and students.

ORIGINS OF THE PROGRAM

The Adopt-A-Student Program was started as a project of the MEA in the 1982-83 school year at the request of the superintendent. Dr. Crim was particularly concerned about the high youth unemployment rate in Atlanta and the number of students leaving the schools--even as graduates--without motivation or resources to find employment. He targeted the 1,000 students who comprise the lowest quartile of the senior class for the Adopt-A-Student program since they were found to be most at risk of unemployment once they left school.

At that time, many of the efforts devoted to job readiness within Atlanta's high schools involved only students enrolled in the selective magnet programs. Dr. Crim asked the MEA, which had demonstrated its interest in helping schools operate an annual career day, for private-sector volunteers who would motivate and guide young people and help them find jobs. The MEA agreed to sponsor the program; Adopt-A-Student started in 1982 with eight consultants and 24 seniors from two high schools.

Judy Beard, operations manager at Southern Bell and an active participant in the MEA, undertook coordination of the program during 1983-84. By the start of the 1984-85 school year, the program had been implemented in 10 schools, and included 157 consultant/student partners, and eight coordinators responsible for monitoring individual consultants and running job readiness workshops. The consultants and coordinators came from 19

companies, with Southern Bell providing the largest number. During the 1985-86 school year, MEA implemented the program in all Atlanta public high schools, began including 11th-graders as well as seniors in some schools, and set a target goal of serving 25 percent of the students in the lowest quartile.

At the conclusion of the 1984-85 school year, the W. T. Grant Foundation awarded funds to the partnership to finance an evaluation of the program. The evaluation is being conducted by a research group at Georgia State University. Based on their preliminary findings from the first year's research and their observations of the program's operations, the researchers worked with Adopt-A-Student staff to strengthen the program.

P/PV interviewed participants and observed the Adopt-A-Student program during the spring of 1985, so most of this description reflects the 1984-85 program year. However, during a return visit in the fall of 1986, P/PV learned of changes made during 1985-86, and of early findings and observations of the Georgia State evaluation team. Some of this later information is included.

Goals

The goal of the Adopt-A-Student Program is to encourage young people to graduate and find a job or to continue their education. Mentoring, developing a relationship between an adult and a youth to provide guidance to the youth, is the centerpiece of the effort. To supplement this attention, workshops are provided to help students identify possible career paths and to seek and acquire job-search and work-place skills.

During its first few years of operation, groups involved in the program differed on the priority of the goals. For the MEA, the program served as an opportunity to provide attention and information to a population that seems ill-served by the high schools. For the superintendent and the director of the partnership, the program's function centered on job readiness and placement; the superintendent intended eventually to reach most, if not all, of the 1,000 students in the bottom quartile. For the school guidance counselors responsible for recruiting the students, Adopt-A-Student met a range of objectives: some saw it as a program for students who were motivated to look for a job and who would benefit most from the assistance; others viewed it as a program for students who needed personal attention. During the 1985-86 program year, the program's management team was expanded to include school as well as business representatives, and the team held discussions with evaluators. These efforts have helped to resolve differences and unify goals. The program continues to focus on youth in the lowest quartile and to assist them in finding jobs or continuing with schooling after graduation.

THE PROGRAM IN ACTION

Organization and Management

Judy Beard of Southern Bell continues as coordinator of the program for the MEA. MEA members can participate in two ways--as coordinators or as consultants. Coordinators act as primary liaisons to the school, recruit volunteer consultants from the private sector, match them with students, and generally act as their supervisors. Coordinators also plan and implement the Job Readiness Workshops that take place on eight Saturdays during the year. In the 1984-85 school year, eight volunteers, most of whom had been consultants in prior years, were chosen by Judy Beard to serve as coordinators. Of these, three were employees of Southern Bell, three worked for AT&T and two came from other MEA companies.

The greatest number of business volunteers are the consultants. They meet with and assist students individually and participate with them in the workshops. Consultants implement their roles differently; they can be guides, mentors, or job counselors. Judy Beard's counterpart from the Atlanta school system is Claude George, a special consultant to the superintendent who coordinates participation by the schools. In each high school, guidance counselors, in addition to their regular work, identify, recruit and screen eligible students for the Adopt-A-Student Program. During the first few years, counselors did not attend an orientation and frequently had a vague understanding of the program's purpose.

Recruitment of Consultants

Consultants are recruited through both formal and informal mechanisms. For example, at Southern Bell, a formal strategy was to circulate a flyer requesting volunteers to adopt a student in a job-finding program. More than 100 employees volunteered. The second largest number came from AT&T, followed by the Federal Reserve Bank; the remaining consultants came from 16 additional companies. The latter group included consultants recruited from the three major businesses, but for the most part all had been recruited more informally by friends already participating in the program. Larger companies are generally better able to accommodate and support participation of employees in community service projects.

Participation takes place during the employee's own time, except for some necessary phone calls during the day. Although participation is not a requirement of their jobs or necessary for job advancement, employees are often recognized for their service in company newsletters. Individuals who volunteered to adopt a

student cited personal, rather than organizational reasons for their involvement: "I wanted to help someone ... I wanted to do something to help a kid stay in school ... I felt I had insight that would be helpful ... I like young people, am familiar with their problems and young people could use other influences besides their family." Most of the volunteer consultants are black (as are the students), and many volunteers feel a strong identification with and concern for the youth and their problems. Most of the volunteers were from middle management--professional, technical and senior support staff.

Training of Consultants

A training and orientation session is held for the consultants at the beginning of the school year. They are addressed by Dr. Crim, Dr. George and Judy Beard. Techniques and suggestions for interacting with the students are described; these include beginning the relationship with some social activity and offering transportation to the workshops. When coordinators assign a consultant to a student, consultants are requested to contact a parent first, to make sure that parents are aware of the program and are willing to have their son or daughter meet individually with the adult consultant.

The Recruitment of Students

With Dr. George as the initial liaison, coordinators work with guidance counselors in the high schools to recruit students to the program. For the 1984-85 school year, 10 schools were asked to provide up to 20 students each. Since the program is decentralized and has few written guidelines, each guidance counselor recruited students in his/her own way. In one school, the guidance counselor selected and assigned to the program seniors from among the lowest quartile whom she felt were most in need of assistance. In another school, an announcement asking for volunteers was made to a large group of eligible students; in a third school, students were picked by the counselor, but were given the choice of whether or not to participate. As a result, experience, motivation and interest among the students varied widely.

Consultant/Student Relationships

During the first few years, once a student was matched with a consultant, the nature and extent of individual interaction was left to the pair. The only requirement was that both attend the eight regularly scheduled Saturday sessions on job readiness. Some of the adults and youth became friendly and had regular conversations, outings and meetings. School guidance counselors reported receiving phone calls from consultants about "their" student's academic progress. However, in up to half of the matches, the pairing never developed into a comfortable relation-

ship. Frequently, consultants who were questioned about the reasons for this described a gap in understanding and expectations that they had been unable to bridge. Youth said they lost interest because the relationship did not seem to help solve specific problems; adults lost interest when they saw a lack of response to their suggestions and invitations.

Changes have been made, some at the suggestion of those involved in the program and some at the suggestion of the Georgia State researchers. The changes include better preparation of consultants for the type of youth with whom they will be working, and training coordinators to support and monitor the relationships. Consultants and students are now matched by the spring of a youth's junior year, so the pair can concentrate on developing a relationship before attending the workshops and planning for post-high school activities. A decision was made to limit the number of youth to between 125 and 150 per year in order to concentrate on strengthening the quality of each set of partners.

The counselors' support for the program has grown because participation has proven beneficial to youth. According to the program's records, which neither P/PV nor the Georgia State researchers have verified, between 70 and 80 percent of youth who remain in Adopt-A-Student until the end of the year obtain jobs or go on to post-secondary education. About two-thirds of the beginning 200 youth stay in the program. The frequency of contact between Claude George's office at the school district and individual guidance counselors has also been increased to help ensure that recruitment criteria are the same at all schools, and that students from the lowest quartile are served.

The coordinators' role has been strengthened and their accountability increased. Consultants are required to file monthly reports with coordinators; consultants can be dropped from the program if it appears that they are not performing acceptably. All consultants and the coordinator responsible for a particular school come from the same company to encourage developing a team structure. Also, a handbook was developed for consultants to use during the year.

The Job Readiness Workshops

The workshops are conducted on Saturday mornings and generally take half a day. Once the formal presentation is over, there is time for each student and consultant to discuss the topics in greater detail. Topics include career exploration, decision-making, non-verbal communication, building interview skills, building self-image and developing positive work behavior. Despite the high quality of the presentations, which are run by employees of the participating companies, student attendance had been very low. Many consultants rated the workshops highly and attended without students. During 1984-85, the format was

changed to include student participation in the delivery of the program to increase their interest. Rules have been tightened so that students who fail to attend with their consultants can also be dropped from the program.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Adopt-A-Student

One of the problems that Adopt-A-Student faced during its first few years of operation was a lack of information about the content and frequency of meetings between consultants and youth. The MEA and its members were excited about undertaking such a program and were convinced that it had enormous potential. However, the voluntary, decentralized and unstructured nature of the program did not provide for the systematic collection of information on how it was working and how it might be improved. The evaluation undertaken in the fall of 1985, in combination with changes in responsibility, has tightened program supervision.

Among the strengths of the Adopt-A-Student program are the following:

- It is the only school/business program in Atlanta both developed by a group of businesses and operated primarily by business volunteers.

- It benefits youth directly, and targets a group of students who often receive the fewest benefits from innovations introduced into the schools.

- It complements the work of the schools by adding an element of personal attention and interest that teachers are frequently unable to provide.

- It helps youth to feel special because they have been chosen for the program and to gain self-confidence through the support provided by their consultant.

Despite its promise and accomplishments in helping youth in the lowest quartile, the program exhibits certain weaknesses. Several that were apparent in earlier visits are now being addressed:

- Program goals have been ambiguous and guidance for the consultants has been erratic and vague. Recent reorganization and the ongoing evaluation may help to correct these weaknesses.

- Although the program was started at the suggestion of the superintendent and continues to have his strong endorsement, the school district did not initially consider it a school program and

some counselors cooperated reluctantly. However, the program's efforts to help participants find jobs or continue their education after graduation have convinced counselors of its value.

- Primary responsibility for program operation rested with a business executive who was authorized by her company to spend up to 50 percent of her time managing the program; however, she was still expected to continue fulfilling all the responsibilities of her full-time job. Management of Adopt-A-Student has been reorganized so that she now spends only 10 percent of her time on supervision of the business coordinators and consultants. Dr. George's office supervises the in-school portion of the program. A recently established 12-member steering committee should also help strengthen program operation.

A major question concerning the program relates to the timing of this intervention for at-risk youth. As indicated, the program's focus is on youth who are at the end of their high school career. Many youth who might have benefited most from such attention have already dropped out of school; many are facing years of chronic unemployment. And, for those in the lowest quartile who remain, it may be unrealistic to try and accomplish Adopt-A-Student's goals in the final year of high school. Although the program's figures indicate success in assisting those who remain, a third of those who begin drop out of the program. The MEA might do well to consider intervening sooner.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

The Atlanta Partnership of Business and Education developed in response to a call from Superintendent of Schools Alonzo Crim for the formation of a "community of believers" in support of school improvement efforts. The partnership has had both symbolic and practical importance for Atlanta schools. It has enlisted broad support from many sectors of the city--including the universities, religious and community organizations, and more than 300 area businesses. This support has taken a variety of forms, including the commitment of human resources and the donation of materials and funds. In a city where confidence in the schools had diminished as a result of 25 years of desegregation litigation, these efforts have greatly enhanced the vitality and stature of the schools.

The partnership has provided a mechanism to channel the business community's growing interest in public education. Partnership programs have supported the superintendent's efforts to improve the schools. They have also been responsible for receiving and disbursing funds from local and national sources for programs that link business and other community sectors with the schools.

From its inception, the framers of the partnership have purposefully set broad objectives that do not readily lend themselves to specific assessment. The major goal has been to gain support for the schools at whatever level and in whatever form the community chooses to offer it.

At a time when the quality of public education has become a focus of attention, there is widespread interest in determining the extent to which recent collaborative efforts by the business community can aid improvement of schools. Atlanta's collaborative effort, in particular, has raised expectations because it is one of the few efforts to provide a single locus for coordinating community-wide collaboration. Atlanta's partnership has led many observers to ask whether coordination has increased the impact of several individual collaborative programs and resulted in stronger school support and improvement in educational quality.

While assessing Partnership accomplishments is on the agenda of outside observers who seek to compare the Atlanta effort with collaborations elsewhere, many of the founders and operators of the partnership are more interested in encouraging rather than measuring business contributions to the schools. Yet, some local observers have begun to seek more specific measures, to ask if a lack of accountability has been beneficial to the partnership. A recent editorial in The Atlanta Journal questioned why, in the midst of a strong and growing economy, Atlanta's business community had not undertaken a systematic program to provide

jobs, or financial aid for college to youth graduating from the city's high schools. John Clendenin, chairman of the board of the National Alliance of Business and CEO of BellSouth Corporation in Atlanta, also wonders whether business has done enough, and has begun to question both educators and business leaders in the Southeast about the content of business support for schools.

Whether efforts like the partnership--which seeks to make business a constituency for the schools and to increase educational resources through business intervention--affect the quality of education in the schools is not easily answered by observation of the Atlanta model. Although the concern and interest of the business community matter to him and, in his view, to the students, Superintendent Crim maintains that it is ultimately the responsibility of the schools to improve the quality of education and that active business community support is only an incentive. In fact, the momentum generated by the partnership has not facilitated a sense of ownership of and responsibility for education by the business community. Rather, the increased visibility resulting from a community-wide effort has strengthened individual collaborative programs already in existence.

Two programs have most effectively brought business support directly into schools. The first, Adopt A School, established by the Chamber of Commerce, operates under the umbrella of the partnership and serves to improve the educational climate for many of Atlanta's schools.

- Eighty-nine of the 117 schools in the district have benefitted from their adoption by business and civic organizations. Schools have gained access to human and material resources, and business people have learned about the workings of the schools.

- Many of the adoptions have permitted schools and businesses to cross boundaries, and to communicate and work together more effectively as a result.

Despite its effectiveness in enlisting business support for the schools, the partnership has not pushed for pairings that are more than ceremonial. Although there are numerous examples of collaborations that directly assist education in the school, there are others where neither partner has been willing to strive for more educationally related activities.

The second of the specific initiatives is Adopt-A-Student, a program that benefits from the public information and dissemination efforts of the partnership, but has chosen to operate outside it. The Adopt-A-Student program was initiated by a local

business organization and continues to rely on the voluntary efforts of its members to manage and implement the program. Among its strengths are the following:

- It has targeted youth in the lowest quartile of their classes, a population frequently neglected in collaborations between schools and business. Youth are paired with adult volunteers who can provide regular support and guidance that may not be available in school.

- It has provided classes and information to participants about jobs and postsecondary education. Statistics collected by the program show that 70-80 percent of the youth who remain in the program for the entire year obtain a job or continue their education.

Observation of the Adopt-A-Student Program indicated several weaknesses in the program that might hamper its growth. However, the same weaknesses were recognized by both volunteer staff and evaluators from Georgia State University, and changes have already been made in linking the program and the high schools, and in coordinating and training the business volunteers. P/PV continues to question the timing of the intervention and the focus on students who are at the end of their high school career, since many of those who are most at risk of unemployment have already dropped out of school. The attention and guidance furnished by the Adopt-A-Student program might help to reduce the dropout rate among younger students beginning high school; the MEA might consider intervening sooner.

Atlanta's citywide partnership has helped to make schools a concern of the entire community. Its success in doing so has rested on its willingness to accept what business has offered rather than encouraging the private sector to take a more active role in improving education and access to employment. When the partnership began five years ago, the support it provided to the superintendent contributed to the accomplishment of improvements in the schools. Now that the relationship has been established, it is time to re-examine the nature of the support and to see if it has realized its potential.

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